(b) No specific request for deployment of Indian troops has been received from IGC.

(c) In response to the UN Secretary General's Flash Appeal, early this year, India had committed US$20 million for humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people. At the Donors Conference held in Madrid on October 23-24,2003, India has committed an additional amount of US$10 million through Trust Funds being coordinated by the UNDP and IMF respectively for reconstruction needs of iraq. A number of proposals including medical assistance, training of Iraqi personnel including those from Foreign Ministry are being processed.

Discussion on Economic issues Between USA and Indian Private Sector

1771. SHRI R.K. ANAND: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any breakthrough has been achieved or is expected to be achieved to expand-up-official discussions on economic issues between the USA and Indian private sectors;

(b) whether negotiations were/are being held with USA for a bilateral trade agreement as services and military to military cooperations; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (c) The second meeting of the India-U.S. High Technology Cooperation Group (HTCG) was held on November 19-20, 2003. The inudustry component of the meeting was held, in partnership with the private sector, in Bangalore on November 19 and the official dialouge was held in Delhi on November 20. HTCG focuses in particular on non-technology, bio-technology, defence technology and information technology. The two sides have not taken any specific initatives on bilateral trade agreement in services.

Letters of Indian prisoners in Pakistani Jail

1772. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to refer to the answer to Starred Question 401 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 21st August, 2003 and state:

(a) whether it is a fact that teenager of Jammu and Kashmir, who strayed into Pakistan a couple of years ago and has recently been released by the Pak authorities has brought letters from a number of Indian prisoners in Pak jails;

(b) if so, the number and the main contents thereof; and

(c) the action taken by government to secure the release of Indians in Pak jails particularly those categorized as Security Prisoners by Pakistan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) As per available information, a boy Ranjit Kumar, who was released by the Pakistan autorities on 30 August 2003, had brought letters from 9 Indians detained in Pakistani jails addressed to their family members requesting them to plead their cases for early release.

(c) Government, through diplomatic channels, have consistently taken up the issue of early release and repatriation of Indian prisoners in Pakistani jails.

Durable partnership with Syria

1773. SHRI NANA DESHMtJKH:

PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India have agreed for durable partnership with Syria;

(b) if so, in which areas the economic opportunities with Syria would be exploited;

(c) to what extent the trade between the two countries would generate;

(d) whether any agreement has also been signed in field of hydrogen fuel; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) to (c) During Prime Minister's State visit to Syria on November 14-16 2003, the two sides agreed to